PIR HASAN SHAH AND THE HISTORY OF KASHMIR

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Since independence there has been a notable increase in the published works on the history of Kashmir. First in the field was Dr. G. M. D. Sufi's *Kashmir*[1] a long and untidy but very readable compendium, whose scope ranges from political history to "letters and litterateurs", "arts and crafts" and so on. It bears the appearance of many years' accumulation of notes, and was described by its author as a "source-book". Less luxuriant and including some fresh information, particularly on the intriguing prehistoric culture of Burzehom, but of the same type is a new long *History of Kashmir* by Pandit P. N. K. Bamzai.[2] It may be recommended as an introduction to Kashmir history for the general reader. Both works have been illustrated at some expense, and we may now suggest that future historians of Kashmir do not increase the cost of their books by coloured illustrations of "fine sceneries". A historical account of Kashmir by J. P. Ferguson[3] should perhaps be mentioned : it contains chapters summarizing the history of the Sultanate and Mughal rule. Dr. Muhibbul Hassan's *Kashmir under the Sultans*[4] is a work of careful and orthodox scholarship, whose greatest contribution is to sort out from divergent sources the course of events and chronology of the reigns of the Muslim Sultans of Kashmir. The work contains rather brief but reliable chapters on "The Administrative System", "Social and Economic Conditions" and "Cultural Activities".

Kashmir, for its size, was rich in medieval chronicles. Apart from the great Sanskrit *Rajatarangini* and its sequels, there is a copious Persian historical literature, mostly unprinted. An attractive publication on the history of Kashmir still in progress is the Persian text of the *Tarikh-i-Hasan*.[5] The first and second volumes were printed nearly ten years ago, but the slender fourth volume appeared in 1961. The third is described as "under preparation".

This undertaking of the Research and Publications Department of Jammu and Kashmir State is much to be commended. The parts already published amount to some 1500 pages, and may well be the longest Persian text printed in the subcontinent since independence The *Tarikh-i-Hasan* has value as a historiographical curiosity as well as a source, as it is a comparatively well-compiled and most ambitious Indo-Persian 'history', written in rural Kashmir as late as 1885. The Department of Research could have chosen to print such earlier

chronicles of Kashmir history as that of Haydar Malik, or the *Bahoristan-i-Shahi*, or one of the 17th century *Tazkiras* of saints of the valley: but on the whole the choice of the *Tarikh-i-Hasan* justifies itself, for it is the largest compendium of Kashmiri history in Persian, and it is well arranged.[6] Its size and scope recall some of the great down country Persian histories. Like the *Akbar-Nama* it is a history with a gazetteer attached. Like Badayuni, Hasan follows up his political history with a full scale *Tazkira* : and like Farishta Hasan preserves (recently) lost sources of a much earlier period.

The peculiar and isolated conditions of Kashmir enabled such a massive Persian history to be written so late. In recent centuries Mughal, Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rule, maintained by an army of occupation had put into effect one of Shayakh Sa'di's maxims for successful government by "cutting down the tall poppies". The aristocracy of medieval Kashmir disappeared, but the Persian culture of the minor privileged classes survived. The Karkun Pandits distinguished themselves in Persian belles-letters in the late 18th and 19th centuries, their indispensability in administration giving them a well-maintained economic position.[7] The theological classes of the Muslim population maintained a tradition of learning, though somewhat enfeebled by lack of patronage of their later rulers. To this class belonged our author, Pirzada Ghulam Hasan, known as Pir Hasan Shah, "a learned Kashmiri, whose work lies entirely among the villagers".[8] He was descended from a Dattatreya Kaul Brahman converted in the 16th century. The family held Jagirs in the eighteenth century, the confiscation of which during the Sikh rule, led to the migration of the author's father, who was himself the author of some literary works, from Srinagar to a village by the Wular Lake.[9]

The Kashmiri Persian literary tradition flourished so late because Persian was also the language of their rulers. The Dogra rule in Kashmir was an offshoot of Sikh power in the Punjab, and after the fall of the Kingdom of the Punjab to the British, the court Persian of Lahore survived in Maharaja Gulab Singh's court. The florid historiographical tradition handed down from the Mughals is well represented by Diwan Kirpa Ram's *Gulab-Nama*,[10] which recounts in the grand manner the subjugation of each small hill-fort, each Raja or brigand, in Gulab Singh's patient consolidation of his authority over the Jammu Hills. The death blow to Persian belles-letters in Kashmir came some years after Hasan wrote his history, with the introduction of Urdu in place of Persian as the language of state business.[11]

Hasan was not untouched by modern influences. New Urdu text books from Lahore supplied him with modern geographical information at the beginning of his work. He was in close contact with

Sir Walter Lawrence, the second officer in charge of the land settlement insisted on after the disastrous famine of 1878, the author of the gazetteer already referred to. How much English Hasan knew is doubtful, but he cites two English sources, Ince's *Kashmir Handbook* and an abridgement of Drew's *Jammoo and Kashmir Territories*. He states his history was begun in 1884 and finished in 1885.[12] Lawrence only came to Kashmir in 1889. Lawrence's book was published in 1895, but Hasan may have gone on revising his work for a number of years till his death, and also probably had access to Lawrence's manuscript. Wherever Lawrence refers to "a learned native of Kashmir" it may be suspected that he means Hasan.

The first volume of Hasan's work is a gazetteer of Kashmir in Persian in which one may feel an English influence, though he had such earlier models before him as Kirpa Ram's *Gulzar-i-Kashmir* and the middle part of the *'Ain-i-Akabari'*. The resemblance is much more obvious to Lawrence's *Valley of Kashmir* then to Ince's or Drew's book, which causes one to wonder whether it may not have been extensively rewritten between 1889, when Lawrence came to the valley and 1898, the year of Hasan's death. That many pieces of information are common to Hasan and Lawrence is not surprising, when Lawrence evidently often turned to Hasan for information. However, in such things as Hasan's quickened interest in almost any visible ancient monuments and his lucid treatment of the tribes and classes of Kashmir one may suspect the disciplining of his perceptions by contact with Lawrence. This first volume has much social and topographical information. It closes with some thought-provoking chapters on recurrent "Terrible Events in Kashmir", Famines (listing 19 outbreaks), Plagues (13) , Floods (16), Fires (18), Sackings of the Shi'ahs (10), and "divers events".

Volume II is a straightforward political history of some 900 pages. The manner of the conversion of Islam to Kashmir, which left a native nobility in power, was such that there was a much less sharp break with the Pre-Muslim past than in other areas in India, and the Sanskrit historical tradition of *Kalpana* was neither lost nor ignored. Hasan claims to have consulted the original Sanskrit when he felt doubts on the reliability of earlier Persian versions of the *Rajatarangini*.[13] From the *Waqa'i' -i-Mulk-i-Kashmir*, a fifteenth century work which cannot be found today, he derives lists of two groups of Hindu sovereigns omitted from the *Rajatarangini*, with brief notices of their reigns taken from the *Ratnakara Purana*. The former lost work may also have been of value to him for the events of the Shahmir dynasty of Sultans.[14] Hasan is a fairly judicious compiler from his sources and takes the story down to his own times.

Volume IV is a collection of biographical notices of poets, mostly, as the editor comments, copied from Khawaja A'zam Diddamari. However the editor is unjust in criticizing Hasan for the celebrated figures he has omitted, as many of them are noticed in the third volume, to which this is hardly more than an appendix.

We may hope that the Persian text of the third volume will soon be published. In the meantime it is accessible in an anonymous Urdu translation[15], the reliability of which it is difficult to judge. It is a *Tazkira*, or collection of lives, of the Shaykhas of Kashmir, arranged according to their *silsilas* (chains of spiritual descent). Much again is taken from Khwaja A'zam Diddamari, and also from two interesting 17th century *Tazkiras*, the *Nur-Nama* of Baba Nasib and the *Asrar-ul-Abrar* of Baba Dau'd Mishkati, which deal with a *silsila* of peculiar interest to the student of Indian and Central Asian Sufism, the Muslim *Rtshis* of Kashmir. Hasan preserves from the 15th century *Waqa'i'-i-Kashmir*, a detailed account of 8 predecessors (not counting the Prophet of Islam and Hazrat Uways Qarni) of saint Nuruddin or Nand Rishi.[16] Here we can see, under a transparent disguise, the transformation of a line of Shaivite ascetics into Sufi Pirs, a process which we may suspect to have taken place at an earlier date in other areas of Greater India,—Khurasan, Turkistan,—but of which understandably the evidence is well suppressed.

Kashmir is, one may reflect, a most interesting area for the comparative historians of Asia. To take one of the English estimates cited by Hasan, the Vale of Kashmir is about 80 miles long and generally some 25 miles broad. In spite of the high incidence of natural and man-made calamities, its fertility supports a considerable population remarkably isolated by natural obstacles. It is much easier there than in the great open areas to see the continuous operation of particular forces, and it is more difficult there to obliterate a historical tradition. It therefore has an interest comparable to that of Catalonia for the European medievalist, or of such areas in the United Kingdom as peninsular Cornwall or the Channel Islands, where it is possible to trace the continuous evolution of a largely immobile lesser bourgeoisie and peasantry from the Middle Ages to the present day. As Stein demonstrated in his admirable essay on the Ancient Geography of Kashmir, very small units of rural life in the valley have a historic existence of a thousand years. Perhaps limited size and geographical isolation tend to encourage strong hereditary factors. Certainly in no other Indo-Muslim kingdom is the hereditary power of "vassal chiefs"[17] so prominent as in the Kashmir Sultanate. Lawrence, coming in 1889 among a people "sullen, desperate and suspicious" who "had been taught for many years that they were serfs without any

rights but with many disabilities."[18] found a startling enough survival of ideas of hereditary rights among the villagers. He wrote :

"Changes of dynasty and changes of system, earthquakes, floods and famines, have alike failed to obliterate the hereditary principle in land tenures in Kashmir, and while the Mughals, Pathans, Sikhs and Dogras have steadily ignored the existence of hereditary occupancy rights, these rights have been kept alive by the village."[19]

A careful study of land tenures may be key to medieval Kashmir politics. Much remains to be done in the social history of both the Sultanate and the Mughal period. We also lack good, limited studies even of the political history of 17th and 18th century Kashmir.

1. *Kashmir—Being a History of Kashmir from the earliest times to our own*, by G. M. D. Sufi, M.A., D. Lit., 2 vols. lxxxvii 833-257 pp. University of the Punjab, Lahore, 1948. Original price Rs. 40.

2. *A History of Kashmir, politcial, social, cultural; from the earliest times to the present day.* by P. N. K. Bamiziai Metropolitan Book Co., Delhi, 1962, xx+748 pp. Rs. 45.

3. *Kashmir : an Historical Introduction* by James P. Ferguson; 214 pp. London. Centaur Press, 1961. 25 shilling.

4. *Kashmir under the Sultans* by Muhibbul Hasan. p. 338; Iran Society, Calcutta. 1959. Rs. 25.

5. *Tarikh-i-Hassan* Vol I. 544+22-pp. Introduced and edited by Sahibzada Hassan Shah (whose name appears only at the end of the useful introduction.) Research and Publications Dept., Srinagar. 1954 Rs. 6.50. Vol. II, 940 pp. (undated, 1954?) Rs. 8.

6. For the 17th and early 18th century Hassan borrows extensively from the history of Khwaja' Azam Diddamari, but his arrangement, separating political events from biographies of Shaykhs, is superior.

7. The State Dept. of Research has also published a *Tarikh-i-Kishtwar* (History of Kishtwar) written in Persian in 1881 by Pandit Shivji Dar, pp. 58. 1962. Rs. 2.50.

8. Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, London 1895. p. 245. For remarks on the state of education in the valley by the end of the 19th century see pp. 228-9 & p.290, noting a Tehsil where the Mullahs could not write.

9. See Professor Shah's introduction, and for another notice, Sufi, *op. cit.*, II 374-375. Sufi states he was 6th in descent from Shaykh Ya'qub Sarfi : if so it was evidently not in the male line.

10. Published in 4to at Jammu in V. S1932 A. S. Copies are still available from the Ranbir State Press, Jammu, Rs. 14.43. It is a handsome example of the litho-printing of the period.

11. Sufi *op.cit.*, II 812-3. Urdu was evidently such a foreign language to Hasan that he absent-mindedly lists a History of Kashmir in Urdu, written by an exile in Lahore, under "History books in English." I pp. 377-8.

12. Hassan. *op.cit.*, I 0p. 12, IV p. 60. It is evident from the note to 1. 377 (note 1186) that the name intended on I, p. 11 also was Ince, not Lawrence.

13. Vol. I pp. 12-13.

14. (From Hasan's statements on I 371 and II 15-16., the *Waqi 'i'-i-Mulk-i-Kashmir Mulla Ahmad* apparently consisted of a Persian translation of the *Rajatarangini* with the additional information of the *Ratnakara* inserted, when the latter work was found in Zain-ul-Abidin's reign, and was preceded by an introductin relating the circumstances of the find. What is not clear from Hasan is whether Mulla Ahmad himself continued the narrative to his own times: if not, the Dibacha or the conclusion must have described in some detail the spread of Islam in the valley. Hasan cites it for events immediately preceding or during the Sultanate period in II, 173, and III (Urdu) 103, 113 See also Muhibbul Hasan's remarks, *op. cit.*, pp. 190 note 5 and Prof. Shah's introduction I p. 3.

15. *Tazkira yi-Awliya-yi-Kashmir*.....ya'ne *Tarikh-i-Hasan Ka Tisra Hissa* 556 pp. Ghulam Mohhammad, Nur Muhammad, Booksellers, Maharaj Ranjit Gank Bazar, Sirinagar. 1960. Rs. 10.

16. (Urdu translation) pp. 106-113.

17. Muhibbul Hasan. *op. cit.*, p. 208.

18. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

19. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 428.